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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [SP](#) [CU](#)
SUBJECT: SPAIN/CUBA: GOS PRESENTS GOC WITH LIST OF
POLITICAL PRISONERS

REF: A. 2007 HAVANA 539

[1](#)B. 2007 HAVANA 1098

[1](#)C. 2007 HAVANA 1145

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Spanish Political Director Rafael Dezcallar told Charge that he presented Cuban Vice Minister for Global Issues Abelardo Moreno with a list of 20-30 Cuban political prisoners, including Oscar Biscet, and asked for their release during the second Spain-Cuba bilateral human rights dialogue in Madrid February 11. Dezcallar said that the Cuban delegation was willing to listen and agreed to some positive steps, including the visits of UN Special Rapporteurs and a visit by Spanish legal experts to discuss potential legislative reforms to bring Cuban laws more in line with international human rights standards. Charge emphasized that the U.S. disagrees with the policy of engagement and does not believe that Raul Castro will preside over a democratic transition in Cuba. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) During a February 13 meeting on an unrelated subject, Spanish Political Director Rafael Dezcallar provided the Charge with a readout of the February 11 Cuba-Spain Human Rights Dialogue, at Charge's request. Dezcallar was the lead Spanish representative at the dialogue. Dezcallar said that the GOS is not under the illusion that the Castro government will release all political prisoners tomorrow, but he said the GOS wants the Cubans to know that the release of political prisoners was an agenda item and a requirement for improved relations. He said he presented a list of 20-30 names including that of Oscar Biscet, who he noted was of particular interest to the USG, and he said the Spanish emphasized that these individuals were of highest priority for reasons of age, health or particularly egregious circumstances. He emphasized to Moreno that the Cubans would not want some of these individuals to die in custody. Moreno accepted the list and, according to Dezcallar, was willing to listen to the message.

[1](#)3. (C) Dezcallar said he stressed that the GOC needs to allow political space for dissidents, including allowing them to meet with embassies and visiting delegations, as well as amongst themselves. He emphasized that the inability to meet with dissidents always overshadowed any positive aspects of visiting delegations and was detrimental to the Cuban desire for a greater international profile. Dezcallar said the two sides discussed the possibility of future visits of UN Special Rapporteurs as well as the need for improved prison conditions, and he characterized the Cubans as "willing to listen," which he said was an improvement over previous years. Finally, he said that the Spanish had secured agreement for teams of legal and judicial experts to visit Cuba to examine aspects of Cuban law that were particularly

odious to international standards of human rights, including Law 88, and the lack of habeus corpus. He said that the Spanish were approaching this from a technical, rather than political position, focusing on the technical and semantic gaps between Cuban statutes and practices and their international commitments to human rights. Finally, Dezcallar said he believed an "intellectual transition" was underway, with the Cuban cognoscenti realizing that the GOC's current attitudes and policies toward human rights were no longer viable.

14. (C) The Charge replied that the USG did not see such a transition, or any transition at all, or the likelihood of Raul Castro presiding over a transition to democracy in Cuba. The Charge said that the U.S. believed the Spanish had walked into a Cuban trap whose goal was to lend legitimacy to Raul and win support for renewed EU engagement in Cuba, support that would be difficult to roll back once secured. Nevertheless, the U.S. appreciated the GOS willingness to continue to maintain a dialogue and keep us informed. Dezcallar emphasized that the GOS does not believe its efforts will bring about a political transition in Cuba, but that it can succeed in improving human rights and securing the release of political prisoners. He referenced an international estimate of approximately 130 political prisoners in Cuba and noted that this was down from around 250 three years ago, which he claimed as not insignificant progress. Dezcallar said it was important for the U.S. and Spain not to pretend there is agreement, but to acknowledge the disagreement while agreeing to maintain dialogue and transparency.

LLORENS